



Research Article

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Hindrances to Third-Party Interventions in Conflict Resolution: United Nations and Patterns of Constraints in Resolving the Lord's Resistance Army Conflict Between 2008-2012

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Abstract

Since 1987, the Lord's Resistance Army has continued systematic human rights violations in the Central African region. Cases of kidnapping, village raids, mass rapes, and murders, have become defining factors to the urgency of resolving the crisis. In an attempt to respond to the conflict, the United Nations Security Council has initiated a number of political and military-based resolutions to control the conflict since 2008, which includes extending UN peacekeeping mandates in Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo, and South Sudan, as well as coordinate efforts with relevant African Union bodies. However, its success is far-reaching, urging the need to contextualize the forms of hindrances that the UN faced in responding to the crisis. Employing Rourke and Bouyer's (1996) concept of collective security and measures of response success, with a research limitation set to 2008-2012, a qualitative research utilizing secondary data is implemented, concluding the following hindrances that can be categorized into the following; (1) Implementation of the additional mandate of the UN Peace Forces, (2) Application of the AU Regional Task Force, and (3) Implementation of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Repatriation, Resettlement, and Reintegration program.

Keywords: Lord's Resistance Army, Collective Security, Conflict Management, United Nations, IGO

1. Introduction

In 2012, the global community was shocked by a documentary published by the organization of Invisible Children to expose the operations of a rebel group in Central Africa known as the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). A number of mass violations of human rights have been committed, which include kidnapping of children to become child soldiers, rape, killings, and village raids (Kelly, Branham, & Decker, 2016). Prior to the documentary, there were close to little International action as to what happened in the areas of Central Africa, let alone any interest to intervene. The Lord's Resistance Army is a militant group that adopts a unique religious ideology. Commanded by Joseph Kony, the LRA believes that Kony is a prophet, obliged by God to bring political restoration in Uganda (Day, 2019). But the means to achieve this radical aim is purely coercive, as systemic human rights violations have been committed and eventually spread in four victim countries of the central African region. Since the 1980s, the LRA has committed human rights violations in Uganda, South Sudan,

Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Central African Republic (Dubal, 2018).

Most of the international responses were initiated in 2008, amid the rise of systemic human rights violations committed by the LRA. The United Nations (UN) through the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has been at the forefront of political and military efforts to resolve the crisis caused by LRA's operations. Between the years 2008-2012, the UN has maintained a firm political presence through a number of measures. The measures have been implemented through the United Nations Office to African Union (UNOAU) and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA). The UNSC has trusted a number of LRA-related mandates to include; (1) concepts of operations, (2) AU-based initiatives, (3) policies, and operational standards, (4) civil protection standards, (5) logistical assistance, and (6) strategic information. Furthermore, the UN's contribution to the political front is the unification of interests among the four affected countries of the LRA operations.

Besides the political front of the UN contribution in responding to the LRA, the UN through UNSC has maintained a strong military presence delegated by its UN peacekeepers. In an effort to be efficient on resources, the UNSC decided to expand the mandates of existing peacekeeping operations, to also include LRA-based military responses, including civilian protection, patrols, escorts, and logistical deliveries. Such functions have been maintained by the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), and United Nations Integrated Development Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA).

Slightly observing the responses of the UN in the political and military front may make observers conclude of the UN's success to intervene in the process of conflict management and resolution of the LRA crisis. Without neglecting the considerable contributions of the UN, this article attempts to outline a number of hindrances faced by the UN as a third-intervening party, to the LRA crisis in Central Africa. It will focus on several issues that the UN encountered throughout its operations between 2008-2012, with aims of contextualizing constraints and understand the limitation of IGO's in the process of intervention.

2. Literature Review

Studies on the LRA have been well diversified over the years. In general, a growing number of literature has dedicated time to understand LRA's leader, Joseph Koni, the motives of the LRA, as well as its operations that differs itself from other rebellious groups in Africa. A deep picturization of Koni as a leader was well depicted in a study by Doom and Vlassenroot (1999), with some focusing on the uniqueness of the LRA's insurgency movement (Jackson, 2002) (Finnström, 2006), as well as debunking the organization's political motives (Vinci, 2007). But it has been a consensus on the existing empirical data and academic literature that the LRA is currently in survival mode (Day, 2019), due to the mass mobilization of resources currently taking place dedicated to the eradication of the LRA.

Understanding the forms of systemic violations of human rights committed by the LRA has been the major concern of academics. Despite the growing literature on the organizational nature of the LRA, it is inevitable to highlight how studies have majorly attempted to focus on the forms of chaos and violations that that LRA has conducted since the 1980s (Acker, 2004) (Dubal, 2018). A number of specific studies that are related to systemic violations of human rights committed by the LRA concern LRA's strategy of fear (Vinci, 2005), forced marriage (Baines, 2014), and children abducted to become child soldiers for the LRA (Kelly et al., 2016) (Ehrenreich, 1998). In fact, the studies on LRA child soldiers are what have moved states to collectively act against LRA, considering the immorality of the circumstances. The very fact has even led to the implementation of new protectionist norms for children that is implemented (Denov & Lakor, 2018).

Besides studies aimed to understand the organizational profile and systemic human rights violations perpetrated by the LRA, another group of academics has focused on how to utilize International judicial systems to bring justice to the perpetrators. The bulk of studies on this topic have focused on the bringing justice to LRA members through the International Criminal Court (ICC), and

discussions on possible challenges faced (Akhavan, 2005) (Apuuli, 2004) (Apuuli, 2006) (Ssenyonjo, 2007a). Despite so, there has not been a consensus among academics, as to whether bringing justice would bring eternal good for former members or not. As a number of studies have focused on possibly finding mechanisms to reintegrate former LRA members to the society (Veale & Stavrou, 2007) (Pham, Vinck, & Stover, 2009), some studies have attempted to highlight why this can eventually provide peace in areas of Central Africa (Vermeij, 2011) (Berdal & Ucko, 2009). The developments thus can explain why there is an emerging study of possibly providing former members that surrender with amnesty (Shanahan & Veale, 2016), to further encourage the withdrawal of currently active members of the LRA.

In regards to the solution of the LRA, a major reason why difficulty is encountered is due to the differences in perception. As Titeca and Costeur (2020) highlighted in their article, different perceptions have been framed in regard to the threat of the LRA. Therefore, although there is a growing consensus that transnational alliances will be pivotal in future collective operations (Branch, 2012), the differences in perception are what will provide the most significant obstacle. Therefore, although some scholars have written how the LRA's approach can be countered through military means (Atkinson, Lancaster, Cakaj, & Lacaille, 2012), there is still a scarce number of scholarly literature that can provide shed to this big question.

Besides literature on the LRA, studies on third party interventions are also critical to further analyse this article's position in the relevant discourses. As a diversified field of literature, third party interventions can be categorized based on the options of strategies that can be encountered (Anugrah, Putra, & Burhanuddin, 2020; Prein, 1987; B A Putra, 2020), forms of contribution contextualized (Y.-M. Chang, Sanders, & Walia, 2010; Darwis, Putra, & Cangara, 2020; Putra, 2020, 2021), and an outline of models of intervention (Lewicki, Weiss, & Lewin, 1992). More specifically on this subject, several studies has attempted to quantify the options of prioritization for intervention structures and models (Wu, Xu, & Ke, 2019) (Belliveau & Stolte, 1977), which is all critical in understanding why some third party interventions are not in the same form of others. Specifically, in the discourse of third party interventions in conflicts, a growing literature can be found on the 3rd party's role in symmetrical conflicts (Balch-Lindsay, Enterline, & Joyce, n.d.), divided only by the specifics of the intervention speed (Conlon & Fasolo, 1990) and timing (Y. M. Chang, Luo, & Zhang, 2018). But this is where a major research gap exists, as there are no studies that focus the **research gap discourse of third party interventions in asymmetrical conflicts, specifically on the constraints faced to deliver a collective security action**. Considering the presence of this gap, this article will attempt to contextualize the forms of hindrances faced, and contribute to the literature of both LRA conflict resolution, and constraints to third party interventions in asymmetrical conflicts.

3. Methodology

In understanding the hindrances to third-party interventions in the context of conflict resolution, this article adopts qualitative research that focuses to test the utilization of a theory (deductive approach). In understanding the patterns of constraints, this article will focus on the case study of the UN and LRA conflict (affecting four countries in the Central African region) for specific empirical data identified between the years 2008-2012. The time frame is justified due to the programs initiated by third party actors in this study case are well present during this period of time. Furthermore, in backing up the claims made, this article emphasizes the utilization of both primary data (government and IGO reports) as well as secondary data (journal articles, web sources, and relevant books).

In order to contextualize the hindrances and understand the patterns of constraints, this article employs the theory of collective security, with specific reference to the work of Rourke and Boyer (1996). In the book 'International Politics on the World Stage,' a number of principles have been highlighted by Rourke and Boyer as pre-requisites to the successful act of collective security. Among the principles outlined include; (1) agreement to de-escalate, (2) agreement of collective action due to attacks to a fellow member, (3) Unified response and perception towards threats, and (4) mutual mobilization of resources to restore order. It is argued that the absence of one of the principles will

lead to an incoherent response and lack of implementational effectiveness of a collective security mandate. By contextualizing the constraints faced in the process of intervention, this article will specifically test the outlined principles and argue that the presence of constraints can be constituted to the lack of fulfillment of one or several principles outline in the concept of collective security by Rourke and Boyer.

4. Results & Discussion

The UN contribution to the crisis in Central Africa is unparalleled. Both political and military fronts that have been engaged by the UN through the UNSC have proven to provide deterrent effects and decreased the scope of LRA's operations throughout the years 2008-2012 (Quinn, 2009). The political fronts that focus on integrating interests and engaging UNOAU and UNOCA, as well as the military fronts by extending existing mandates of UN peacekeepers, namely BINUCA, UNMISS, and MONUSCO (Ssenyonjo, 2007b), shows the consistency of conflict management and resolution initiated by a third-party stakeholder. However, a number of hindrances have been identified, and argued as critical in order to further maximize resources and interventions in war-torn areas such as Central Africa. Following this section is a list of constraints that the UN encountered in responding to the LRA between the years of 2008-2012.

The obstacles faced by the UNSC in eradicating the LRA have been well persistent since the beginning of 2008. Although there have been rapid developments in the war against the LRA directed by the UN, many obstacles have been faced by the UNSC itself and the external circumstances of the war against the LRA. Various developments such as the establishment of the African Union Regional Task Force in 2012 are a big jump, compared to some efforts from the UN in overcoming the LRA through the UNSC from 2008 to 2011.

Constraints faced by the UN in this regard consist of several key concerns. Some of the main programs that have been carried out by the UNSC in their efforts to eradicate LRA groups are each faced with significant obstacles. The first obstacle is the obstacle faced in the implementation of the Peace Forces mandate, which greatly limits the space for the ability to eradicate the LRA because of the limited mandate entrusted. The second obstacle encountered was the obstacle to the implementation of the African Union Regional Task Force that was influenced by various political dynamics that occurred in the LRA victims (Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, South Sudan, Central African Republic). The last obstacle faced was the constraints on the implementation of the DDRRR (Disarmament, Demobilization, Repatriation, Resettlement, and Reintegration) program which had been implemented since 2008 by MONUSCO and then spread to BINUSCA and UNMISS.

4.1 *Implementation of the Additional Mandate of the United Nations Peace Forces*

Decision making in the UNSC reflects the policies of the UNSC based on the interests of veto holders. Although there are 15 members, 5 of them have special rights commonly known as Veto Rights. Veto is a right owned by the United States, France, Britain, Russia, and the People's Republic of China, to directly invalidate a security resolution that it wishes to implement. This capability means that the UNSC will act in the face of an international threat only if the five veto-holding countries agree to do so. This situation is one of the main obstacles for the UNSC to implement a strong resistance in response to the presence of the LRA.

Decisions on interventions of any kind must be approved by procedures within the collective security initiator organization (in this case the UNSC). The UNSC in facing the LRA threat has several options. However, the choice chosen by the UNSC which focuses on regionalism and the use of UN peacekeeping forces is considered a very slow response and does not show great seriousness in responding to the threat. Some of the reasons for this occurrence were the first presence of Arab Uprising in 2010 (Cohen, 2016). Starting from the country of Tunisia and spreading to almost all countries in the Middle East, the attention of the UNSC and the international community focused on

mass demonstrations and massacres by dictators who needed a faster response than with the threat of the LRA. The international world is in debate as to whether or not to intervene in several cases in Middle Eastern countries that are facing such turmoil.

The second reason is the limited capacity of the Security Council to act decisively. Decisive action will produce a mandate which in this case would ideally lead to the possibility of a mandate to carry out Humanitarian Intervention. The main obstacle faced in cracking down on the LRA so that using the mandate extension option is the limited international capacity and desire to send a military operation against the LRA (Vinci, 2005, 2007). Sending special forces to overcome the LRA is not possible, given a large number of military operations with the aim of peacebuilding being located on various continents at this time. The situation made the Security Council use the addition of a mandate as an alternative.

Departing from the statement above, the main obstacle arises in the eradication of the LRA group, namely the use of UN peacekeepers. Although an initiative has emerged from the African Union to resolve the issue with the LRA, the UN direct intervention in the LRA case is to carry out several additional military operations through existing peace forces namely MONUSCO and UNMISS. The main disadvantage of using the peacekeeping force is that the peacekeeping force does not have the mandate or authority to directly kill LRA rebellion groups (Branch, 2012). Peacekeeping Forces are only allowed to carry out attacks after being attacked first, so that further chases are not allowed. The situation is a very heavy blow, because the LRA is a group that needs to be pursued constantly in order to be completely eradicated. The number of Peace Forces located in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo is also far from ideal if you want to patrol all the LRA threat areas.

From 2008 to 2011, difficulties were seen in the above situation. LRA is able to survive until now, because the space they have is still very broad (Finnström, 2006; Tim Allen et al., 2008). When the Ugandan government declared war on the LRA, Uganda's biggest obstacle was when the LRA accelerated its pace and spread to so many regions. The limited number of UN peacekeepers, and the mandate as a peacekeeper, is the reason why the war against the LRA cannot be maximized, due to the large possibility to expand the range and space of the LRA.

Another difficulty faced by the UN is the existence of the LRA itself. Same with the majority of rebel groups, that the location of the headquarters and operations will always be kept secret and is a remote and difficult place to reach. The decision was taken by the rebel group on the grounds of eliminating the possibility of arrest or attack against the group. The UN Peacekeeping Forces MONUSCO and UNMISS have great difficulty in dealing with the LRA, because the location is so remote. The remote location made the LRA unable to patrol or carry out military escorts to remote areas. This has expanded the space for the LRA, so that it can continue to attack in places that are not reachable by the Peace Forces. This problem becomes an obstacle when the UN Peacekeeping Force has a goal to limit the space of the LRA, which has a direct impact on the survival of the LRA itself.

4.2 Application of the African Union Regional Task Force

The success of the UN effort in handling the LRA will depend on the ability of regional-based cooperation from the AU. UNOCA has worked in the formation of military cooperation namely the Regional Task Force which is planned to consist of a maximum of 5,000 troops (Titeca & Costeur, 2015). The task of UNOCA will continue to provide assistance to the African Union Regional Task Force through cooperation with UNOAU, so that the war against the LRA can take place effectively. But the reality is that, the African Union Regional Task Force still has many shortcomings that are far from the ability of the Security Council to resolve.

As Johan Galtung states (1996) about the Spheres of Cosmopolitan Conflict, the third actor was very important in this case. The participation of a third actor is very important in responding to a security threat that has experienced Regional Spillover (spread regionally). The AU through the Regional Task Force in this case is a form of intervention of a real and ideal third actor as an effort to eradicate the LRA group. Nevertheless, the application of RTF is still faced with many obstacles.

The Ugandan government through the UPDF (Uganda People's Democratic Front) has taken the most active role in the LRA crisis before the formation of the RTF in 2012 (Apuuli, 2004; Kelly et al., 2016). Since the formation of the LRA, Uganda has declared war and was very visible since the 2000s through military operations that pursued the group. Uganda, of the four LRA victims, is a country that places the LRA threat as a priority from the Ugandan government which must be resolved. The problem that arises is that the Central African Republic, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo do not have the same initiative as Uganda from 2008 (Quinn, 2009). This makes the efforts of MONUSCO and UNMISS passive and ineffective, given the very much that the Peace Forces depend on the national military force of the country. Continued negotiations have only been successful since the formation of UNOCA in 2011, and have at least built the urgency of the LRA problem on the affected countries. Nevertheless, there is still a lack of commitment among the LRA victims in eradicating the group.

UNOCA has major obstacles in encouraging the four LRA-affected countries to contribute more troops. The plan of the African Union Regional Task Force is to send 5,000 troops in an effort to eradicate the LRA. However, UNOCA was only able to negotiate and obtain a total troop of 2,860 (UNSC, 2012). The amount is far from ideal to be able to pursue the LRA which has now spread to areas covering 115,000 square miles. A lack of commitment makes UNOCA increasingly difficult to make South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic to send more troops.

The difficulty in the African Union Regional Task Force (AU-RTF) as the Security Council and UNOCA's biggest effort in eradicating the LRA, is the capacity of unequal military forces. The AU-RTF, which consists of 3 countries at present, still does not have sufficient capacity even to carry out a standard military operation. For example, a military force group located in Nzara, South Sudan. UPDF, which is the Ugandan military force, on the other hand, has sufficient capacity and experience in combating LRA groups.

Until the end of 2012, the AU-RTF process continued to run within the scope of each country's territory for a while. The reason is that there is not yet a clear command in the AU-RTF, the Concept of Operations (CONOPS) which has been approved by the four countries. CONOPS determines the concept of military operations to be undertaken, and also how the chain of command will be implemented later. CONOPS is also essential in determining the overall mission, area of operations, tactics, logistics, and strategy. The existence of suspicion based on history is one of the difficulties to unite these thoughts. Uganda, for example, which previously gave support to the rebel group in the Democratic Republic of Congo, M23, which caused the Democratic Republic of Congo not to give permission to Uganda to enter its territory even in the context of the pursuit of the LRA.

Conflicts over unapproved CONOPS have had a direct impact on access to the LRA region. Until now UNOCA has not been able to encourage the Democratic Republic of Congo to contribute to the AU-RTF military forces. Congo's closure of the negotiations has left many regions free to enter by the LRA due to the lack of safeguards, leaving Congo with the most number of attacks in 2011, 222, almost 5 times more than those in the Central African Republic and South Sudan. Many areas that are not strictly guarded are also unable to be reached by MONUSCO patrols, making Congo a feasible LRA nest during the 2008-2012 period (UNSC, 2012). Congo is also the most passive country in terms of domestic policy towards the LRA, when compared to the 3 other victim countries. This is certainly a major obstacle for the UN in eradicating the LRA group, due to the difficulty of negotiations between the actors involved. It is difficult for the UNSC through UNOCA to be able to fulfill its duties under these circumstances. The political problems that have arisen among several member states in the AU-RTF have made it difficult for the UN to unite the powers of these countries (UNSC, 2011).

4.3 *Implementation of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Repatriation, Resettlement, and Reintegration (DDRRR)*

From 2008 to 2012, the UN was faced with several obstacles in implementing the DDRRR program. The DDRRR program has a very significant impact in reducing the number of LRA groups. Since the LRA is not an organization consisting of members loyal to the aims of the rebellion, reducing the number

of groups is an essential goal in the fight against the LRA group. Efforts to reduce the number can be done by direct killing through coercive means, or applying an approach so that group members automatically escape from the group. The DDRRR used the second tactic, and was proven to have increased the initiative of tens to hundreds of LRA members to escape from the LRA group itself. Some obstacles will be faced by the implementing actors of the DDRRR program.

First is the information dissemination media used by MONUSCO. Initiatives to escape from the LRA will emerge when members feel that there is an opportunity to escape, and the government is able to provide protection to the former member from possible attacks by residents as a form of revenge. Distribution through leaflets has been utilized by MONUSCO, also through FM radio stations. Radio is considered a very appropriate medium in spreading DDRRR programs known as 'Come Home' in remote places (hard to reach) and is a very effective mechanism. Radio use, however, only covers 30% of the total LRA victim areas in the Central African Republic. This is due to the existence of some very remote areas, which also do not have access to radio media. This is the biggest obstacle, considering that the LRA movement is focused in areas that are very remote such as areas that do not have radio access, thus giving a significant impact on the effectiveness of eradication of the LRA group.

The second obstacle is the existence of security doubts about the DDRRR program by LRA members who plan to flee. UNOCA and UNOAU have encouraged the African Union to implement a mechanism that will guarantee the security of former LRA members. The fear of being attacked by residents if returning to their respective communities is one of the biggest problems of the success of the DDRRR program. The governments of each country that are not transparent in terms of information about the treatment that will be given to former LRA members, have built fear of the possibility of prosecution. Doubt also arises because of the lack of clarity about the meeting point.

DDRRR in some regions of the Democratic Republic of Congo adopted Assembly Points (meeting points). The meeting point was created by MONUSCO to facilitate the escape of LRA members who wanted to escape. The meeting point will be the pick-up point for LRA members who have fled, and will be taken to a safe place. The project has been implemented by MONUSCO since January 2012, and has encountered several obstacles in its implementation. The meeting point determined by MONUSCO is located in a very remote area, and does not guarantee that the area is free and safe from the LRA. MONUSCO also set the point where patrols are not routinely carried out.

Fears and doubts about the DDRRR program are most clearly seen in Uganda. Uganda and several other regions are still experiencing problems in implementing DDRRR. Although it has been encouraged by the United Nations and the African Union to respect the human rights of former LRA members, there are still many violations that are often committed. In some cases when child soldiers from the LRA surrendered to UPDF, UPDF often committed violence against the child because he had previously attacked the Ugandan military. The two factors, namely access to information and the obscurity of some matters in the DDRRR itself, became a hindering factor for the UN in eradicating the LRA group in terms of reducing the number of LRA slowly.

5. Conclusion

Rourke and Boyer believed that collective security responses will require the presence of agreement to de-escalate, agreement of collective action due to attacks to a fellow member, unified response and perception towards threats, and mutual mobilization of resources to restore order. In the case of the UN response towards the threat of the LRA in Central Africa, political and military measures have been focused as means to manage and resolve the crisis. As aimed in this article, its implementation between the years 2008-2012 has led the UN to encounter constraints that are proven critical to the overall effectiveness of the UN response as a third party intervening stakeholder. Several hindrances faced, as elaborated in this article, include; (1) implementation of the additional mandate of the UN Peace Forces, (2) implementation of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Repatriation, Resettlement, and Reintegration, and (3) application of the AU Regional Task Force. In correlation to the theory employed in this article, the hindrances encountered by the UN can be associated to the lack of a unified response

and perception over the threat faced by state actors (four affected states in Central Africa) and relevant IGOs (AU and UN), as well as the lack of willingness to mobilize resources to restore order. In contextualizing the hindrances, it is clear that in order for collective security outcomes be effective in responding to crisis such as asymmetrical conflicts like the LRA, fulfilling the four parameters outlined by Rourke and Boyer is pivotal to attain desired outcomes.

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